DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 562 CE 044 652

AUTHOR Valli, Linda
TITLE Authority Relations at School and Work: A Case Study of Office Education.
PUB DATE 18 Oct 83
NOTE 31p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adoption (Ideas); Attitude Change; Case Studies; Cooperative Education; Cooperative Programs; *Education Work Relationship; Employer Employee Relationship; Family Characteristics; Family Influence; Followup Studies; Graduate Surveys; High Schools; *Office Occupations Education; Outcomes of Education; *Power Structure; Social Structure; Student Attitudes; Teacher Student Relationship; *Work Attitudes; *Work Environment

ABSTRACT

A study examined the reproduction of authority relations in a cooperative office education program at an urban, primarily working-class high school in a midwestern city. The subjects of the case study were 16 current program enrollees, 17 program alumnae, and a female teacher who described herself as a pro-union feminist. Study participants, all female, were interviewed concerning their family backgrounds and influences, experiences during the cooperative office education program, and their working life and perspective after high school. It appeared that both the school and workplaces engage in practices to transmit a work ethic and docile respect for authority and to accommodate young workers to their place in a hierarchical division of labor. The young workers studied often exhibited loyal, dependable, and docile behavior even while they were quite critical of the work behavior of their superordinates. Those individuals studied appeared to be good workers not so much because they had internalized the expectations of their employers and the lessons of the school, but because they had their own psychological and cultural reasons for producing high-caliber work. Although the main process at work in their lives was one of social and cultural reproduction rather than transformation, it is argued that their insights and actions did more than recreate oppressive structures and relations. These individuals worked hard because they experienced work as: (1) helping their supervisors (whom they liked); or (2) helping the consumer (with whom they identified). (MN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L Valli

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED271562

AUTHORITY RELATIONS AT SCHOOL AND WORK: A CASE STUDY OF OFFICE EDUCATION

Linda Valli, Assistant Professor
The Catholic University of America
October 18, 1983

Although a plethora of recent literature focuses on the "problem" of the transition from school to work, most of it analyzes the role the school plays in allocating labor power to empty slots in the job structure (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Erickson, 1975; Gaskell, 1981; Kerckhoff, 1976; Report of a Conference, 1978; Rosenbaum, 1978; Sewell, Hauser and Wolf, 1980), or in technically preparing students for future jobs (Ashton, 1976; Brannen, 1975; National Commission for Manpower Policy, 1976). These two foci can be referred to as the reproduction of the social and sexual divisions of labor, and the reproduction of the technical relations in production.

But little of either this sociological or policy-oriented literature analyzes the school/work transition as it relates to particular sets of social relations that characterize work organizations, or, more concisely, the reproduction of the social relations in production. This is somewhat surprising since almost twenty-five years have gone by since Parsons described the classroom as a social system which

> functions to internalize in its pupils both the commitments and capacities for successful performance in their future adult roles, and...can be treated as an agency of socialization; that is to say, it is an agency through which individual personalities are trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles (1959: 297).

Yet not much serious investigation or theorizing has been carried out on the "motivational" aspect of this description beyond Dreeben's (1968) claim that the school effects psychological changes that enable persons to make transitions among other institutions, Althusser's (1971) claim that the school is

CE046652

the primary site of ideological reproduction, and Bowles and Gintis's claim that the school reproduces the social relations in production through a structural correspondence principle.

This article takes serious the perspective that the school is embedded in the process of reproducing the social as well as the technical aspects of labor power by empirically and theoretically assessing the ways in which this relationship has been elaborated. It does so through an ethnographic study of the reproduction of authority relations as it occurred in a cooperative office education program, a program which I will frequently refer to by the acronym COOP (pronounced co-op). Authority relations were selected as the specific type of social relations to investigate since they are fundamental to both school and work structures. A cooperative program was selected because, more than any other form of education, its primary purpose is to structurally link learning to workplace needs. Its purpose and structure, therefore, make it an ideal setting to analyze socialization, privileged site, and correspondence theories.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The data for this analysis were collected during the 1980-81 school year. The site was a comprehensive, urban, primarily working class high school, which I will call Woodrow High, in a mid-western city. I was present at Woodrow from September through June on approximately half the school days, scattered throughout the year. Three related techniques were utilized to collect the data: participant observation in the school and at work (fourteen sites in all); formal and informal interviewing of significant subjects throughout the year (e.g. teachers, students, supervisors, alumnae and co-workers); and analysis of curricular materials and other related documents.

Unlike most educational programs, which take place primarily within

school buildings, cooperative education alternates work experience with school experience. Students are assisted in finding career-related jobs and are to receive on-the-job, as well as classroom, training. The implicit rationale of the program is that the worksite is a valuable source of learning and should be utilized as an educational tool. The stated expectation is that cooperative education will help students identify their career objectives, that this identification will lead to appropriate training in attitudes, skills and knowledge, and that the training will bring about career results. These careers are then supposed to create a better community, a community that will "experience a productive growth of its citizens, schools and businesses."

The cooperative office education program at Woodrow High was organized in a fairly typical manner. During their senior year, students who selected the program attended classes in the morning and worked from three to four and a half hours in the afternoon, for which they received both one school credit and pay. The students were supposed to carry three morning classes in addition to the "related" office education class, the class specifically designed to relate to their afternoon work experience. This class was scheduled to meet five times a week for forty minutes each day. Students would often miss class, excused or not, but would report for work that afternoon. Four times a year, the teacher (referred to hereon as Mrs. Lewis) met with each supervisor for a student evaluation session. Within a day or two, Mrs. Lewis would then meet with each student in her private office to discuss the evaluation.

Mrs. Lewis had been directing the program at Woodrow High for twelve years. She perceived herself and introduced herself as a pro-union feminist, as a person who believed in and worked towards women's equality with men, particularly in the business world. Having had parents who encouraged her to succeed just as much as they encouraged her brothers, Mrs. Lewis belonged to

numerous professional and women's organizations, and had a career-oriented life history. Having herself been active in the local teacher's union, Mrs. Lewis expressed regret that many women had anti-union attitudes since, she believed, that was the only way teachers or secretaries would ever get anything. She related this anti-union attitude to "terrible self images," claiming that many women teachers and secretaries behaved like "doormats," thanking everyone for allowing them to have "wonderful jobs," rather than regarding themselves as equals.

In addition to the numerous interviews I conducted with Mrs. Lewis, I interviewed each of the sixteen students enrolled in COOP that year and seventeen of the COOP alumnae. My goals for the alumnae interviews were threefold: to obtain more information on family backgrounds and influences, since I had no direct contact with parents; to collect reflective accounts of their decision to take and their experiences within cooperative office education; and to obtain information on work life and perspectives after high school. I anticipated that these accounts would both confirm and elaborate upon the information I was gathering from my work within the school, and this expectation was realized. Apart from being all women, the students enrolled in COOP were quite representative of their school. A few were unusually wealthy, a few unusually bright. Some of the students went on to four year universities, but the vast majority stayed in office work, occasionally supplementing their preparation with community college or on-the-job training.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social relations in production basically refer to ways in which the labor process is organized to secure the appropriation of surplus value. Since raw labor power, or the potential for work, must be translated into real labor, and since workers do not necessarily want to produce "the amount of labor that

the capitalist desires to extract from the labor power they have sold" the labor process must be controlled for surplus value to be extracted and profit to be made (Edwards, 1979: 12).

While arguments could be made that clerical workers are not directly involved in the production of commodities and that state workers do not produce profit for the capitalist, Wright (1978) persuasively argues that mental and manual laborers in both private and public sectors have "unpaid labour extracted from them" and, therefore, have economic interests in common. Because of this, and because my field observations indicated no significant difference in the labor process between sectors, I analyze state and private sector office relations within a common dynamic.

Control of the labor process is, thus, at the heart of the social relations in production as they are discussed throughout this study. But, as Edwards points out:

> Control is rendered problematic because, unlike the other commodities involved in production,labor power is always embodied in people, who have their own interests and needs and who retain the power to resist being treated like a commodity (1979:12).

One of the primary tasks of work supervisors, then, is to see to it that production quotas are met, that workers produce the quantity and quality of work demanded by the company. This task is more easily accomplished if two conditions are met: if workers have already internalized productivity standards or a work ethic, and if students feel some sort of loyalty or attachment to their boss. The school, as a job training site, is often looked to and regarded as an arena in which those conditions can be brought about, and the COOP program at Woodrow High School was no exception. Formal and informal practices within the program were definitely aimed at helping students acquire proper dispositions of productivity and deference; other practices, however,

served to undermine these lessons.

Ironically, while this article takes strong exception to Althusser's privileged site thesis, it does draw upon his notion of the social order as a structured totality. This concept enables us to see that even though the school or school personnel engage in practices which seek to define, naturalize, legitimate and, therefore, reproduce what are and are not "proper" social relations, it does not always or necessarily succeed. If society is envisioned as Althusser's structured totality, in which various domains are in "relative autonomy" to one another and in which "reciprocal action" occurs (Althusser, 1971: 135), no such a priori conclusion is possible. By theoretical definition, conflicts, contradictions and changes within and between levels make the production of a new generation of workers problematic. The transition from school to work can never be reduced to the simple question of inculcating proper work dispositions (Wolpe, 1978). These "required" dispositions are not necessarily stable, not necessarily uniform from site to site, not automatically transferable from one social context to another, and not necessarily agreed upon by school and work officials. The functionalist models of society that underlie the theories of Parsons, Dreeben, and Bowles and Gintis leave no room for structural incongruity.

Moreover, the school/work models of each of these theorists tend to be exclusively structural, discounting the entire realm of human agency. These models tend to assume a static society,operating on the basis of shared norms which passive recipients mechanically internalize. They conflate varying dispositions, behaviors and motivations into a single construct (socialized) and conflate individual biography, group culture, and social structure into one harmonious unit. Nowhere is this more evident than in Parsons' (1959: 308) telling phrase "role-personality," in which the person becomes little more than

a machine acting in correspondence to the "needs" of society or the requirements of the mode of production.

By contrast and following the model of Willis (1977), I argue that the reproduction of work relations must include the reproduction of consciousness, subjectivity and cultural forms; it must draw upon everyday practices to explain not only how social relations are reproduced, but how they are (potentially) contested and transformed as well. In the words of Giddens:

> All social reproduction is grounded in the knowledgeable application and reapplication of rules and resources by actors in situated social contexts: all interaction thus has, in every circumstance, to be contingently 'brought off' by those who are party to it. Change is in principle involved with social reproduction...social systems are chronically produced and reproduced by their constituent participants. Change, or its potentiality, is thus inherent in all moments of social reproduction. (Emphasis in the original).

A fruitful way of analyzing the reproduction of the social relations in production, therefore, is to examine the relations among ideological, cultural and labor processes. What aspects of the structured totality converge to produce workers with appropriate forms of consciousness and behavior and what aspects diverge, rendering discrepancies, contradictions and potential conflicts in the preparation of workers for the social relations in production? How do consciousness and behavior themselves affect school and work structures and procedures?

These are the questions addressed in this ethnographic account of authority relations in educational ideology, in the organization of the labor process in the various offices, and in student/worker culture(s). Special attention is given to the correspondences and contradictions within and between each level since these are the relations which centrally shape the young women's consciousness, work orientations and practices. Of some surprise in the analysis is the extent of a critical perspective among the students despite the

overdetermination of an essentially conservative work ideology presented at the school coupled with an already present traditional, conformist cultural orientation to work.

BECOMING PRODUCTIVE WORKERS

The School Experience

At the formal curriculum level, Mrs. Lewis, the COOP teacher, stressed the importance of students improving their productivity. Quantity of work, for example, was one of the explicit areas in which students were evaluated in their jobs and the following remark is characteristic of the comments Mrs. Lewis made to the students' supervisors about the relation between productivity and pay:

> We want them to have a good production rate. It's a problem for the young girl especially. They don't see the connection between what they're being paid and the work they do each hour. They don't see that they're being paid to produce and that it should be a good amount. So we have to start making them aware that they need to do a certain amount, that they should be up-ing their speed after they've been working a while.

To the students themselves, Mrs. Lewis would direct the following types of comments:

> Ladies, one reason people are fired is for standing around the door waiting for the bell to ring. Employers expect you to work until the last minute.

> Okay, girls, we don't have any time to lose. We're not going to stand around here and take half pay today.

But in the day to day manner in which she organized classroom activities, Mrs. Lewis operated in a manner which conveyed the message that they had plenty of time to lose, that there was nothing of significance to accomplish or learn. Once Mrs. Lewis assigned work, she seldom supervised the process or pace at which tasks were completed, generally merely checking in the end product. When the COOP students were between units, they would often sit and wait with

nothing to do until something was assigned. This occurred because Mrs. Lewis was often in her back office or some other area of the department engaged in other activities during classtime, evoking such comments as, "Does anyone know what we're going to do today?" or "I'm so bored; I wish we would do something."

Not surprisingly, students quickly began to engage in activities that encouraged avoidance of work assignments in the classroom. Since the COOP class was the last one scheduled before their lunch time, a common remark addressed to Mrs. Lewis was, "I'm hungry. Can we go eat?" Sometimes Mrs. Lewis initiated the early departure for lunch herself, let students out early on certain days, or ignored those students who left early without permission. Given the fact that many students frequently arrived at class ten minutes late and initiated departure ten minutes early, the actual classtime remaining was quite short.

Seldom were the 40 minutes scheduled actually utilized for teaching and learning purposes. When students were in class, they often (with or without Mrs. Lewis) talked about such matters as losing weight, dating, drinking, buying clothes, cheerleading activities, or other such social matters. Although they sometimes engaged in such conversations at work, the major difference was that at school, they were not simultaneously involved in the accomplishment of a work assignment.

Mrs. Lewis also initiated practices of eliminating classtime entirely. To begin with, she had obtained the permission of the principal to shorten COOP to a 40 minute period from the normal 50 minute meeting time. This, she said, was necessary for the students to have time to eat and take the bus to work (although some of them skipped lunch and a number were not dependent on public transportation). At other times, lunches were planned in place of class periods, or Mrs. Lewis told the students if, for example, they turned in all their work by Wednesday, they could have Thursday and Friday off.

"Mental Health Days" were also given and taken with some degree of frequency, usually on Fridays. The ideology drawn upon on these occasions was that for the sake of the students' mental health they needed a break from the routine and hard work they were engaged in. Obviously, then, neither Mrs. Lewis nor the students worked very hard at being productive during classtime; the verbal counseling to be productive had little effect on behavior.

If Bowles and Gintis's correspondence theory of the school as the structural site of social reproduction were correct, the students would be as eager to avoid production at work as they were at school; they would have learned from their structural relations and experiences at school how to successfully "gold-brick," how to restrict their output of work.

Such, however, was not the case. Although the students avoided production school, they seldom had to be reprimanded or even reminded to work hard at their places of employment. In fact, the students' internalization of a work ethos had little to do with the lessons they learned in school, but a great deal to do with their sense of identity and culture, and with the demands of the labor process itself.

The Work Experience

First of all, the students derived a sense of personal pride from what they produced; they took great satisfaction in their accomplishments, often rendering close supervision unnecessary. One afternoon, for instance, while observing a COOP student's work at a photocopy machine, I inquired about a plastic object she was placing over the original copy. She offered the following comment by way of explanation:

> I like myself to look good, so I make sure things are centered on a xerox machine, and I put a white plastic cover on the back so shadows don't show through, even though I don't have to.

Donna also said that she got a "kick out of seeing letters I've typed actually

mailed out to someone. I can say, 'I typed this'!"

In explaining why she preferred clerical work to a job like waitressing, which she had also done, another student, Maureen, said it was because

> in a clerical position you can take more pride in your work and feel better about yourself....I like to do things I do well. It makes me feel good about myself.

Jessica, a recent graduate of the COOP program, described a similar sentiment regarding the increased responsibilities her new job entailed:

> Just recently I had to take notes at a meeting. I had never done that before and I did really good. I got lots of compliments on them....But it was hard to take minutes because they kept switching from one subject to another and I had to keep up and get everything.

A second reason why many students did not need to be taught productivity was because they saw their work as "service" to the customer and wanted to deliver that service as well as they could. In explaining why she liked her job, for example, Marion stated:

> I feel as though I'm accomplishing something, as though I'm helping people who need help. If the insured aren't happy with what they have, it's important to me because they're paying my salary.

Other students extended this "service" orientation to the nature of the company itself. Two students wrote the following description of their workplace on their final examinations:

> Our bank is very important in today's society because is is a place where you can save your money and earn interest, but also get loans, a checking account and financial advice... We have special events coming up like June Dairy Day where the bank gives away free ice cream cones and cheese.

> While the private mortgage insurance industry remains an unknown among the general public, it has helped a significant segment of the nation's home buyers. REMIC has made it possible for thousands of prospective home buyers--particularly young first-home buyers with adequate incomes but a relatively small amount of savings available for a down payment--to obtain a mortgage loan. A great American tradition, home ownership, has been perpetuated with REMIC mortgage insurance.

This notion of serving or helping also extended to their co-workers and provides the third reason why "teaching productivity" was not a critical task for the school or a critical problem for the employer. When I asked the students and graduates what they liked most about their jobs, one of the most frequent responses was the people they worked with. They used expressions like "they were very welcoming to me when I started working," or "we're just like one big family." Frequently, the women would shop together on their lunch hour or go drinking together after work. Nancy's description of her co-workers is typical:

> ...the people are really nice. They explain things well and don't just throw it in your face and say do it... . They treat you nice.

Because of these personal ties, the women wanted to get their work done and do it well. If they did not, friends and co-workers would have to share the burden.

Sometimes, student/workers even took on extra work to help co-workers they liked. Denise, who openly resisted doing work for her bosses because they treated her "like a slave," would voluntarily work for the maintenance crew.

> I do work for the guys downstairs. I type up their work schedules since the guy who's supposed to do it can't type. But I don't mind doing their work because they appreciate it.

When positive relations between co-workers did not provide the incentive necessary to work, the thought of worker retaliation did. If the office workers did not carry their "fair share" of the work load each day, it was quite probable they would eventually be "dumped on" by other workers. Dorothy described how this process in the claims department of the insurance company in which she worked took place. Work in this department consisted in processing (retrieving, xeroxing and re-filing) thousands of insurance claims

and policies each day. Two crews, a day and an evening crew, had to be hired to keep up with the work that accumulated. An unspoken understanding existed between the two crews that each would put out full effort to process the microfiche. If one crew left stacks of work for the other crew, they could be sure to find a similar, if not larger, stack of work left for them the next day.

Another way in which the labor process provided productivity incentive was that boredom was dreaded far more than hard work. In fact, hard work was often a very satisfying experience. Patti and Kris expressed similar sentiments on their mid-term examinations:

> Over the Christmas holidays we were so busy some days that it was hard to keep up with notating HRC's (History Record Cards). But I enjoyed the challenge. After a hard day at work it felt good to know that you worked so hard and you earned a good day's pay.

> I think I would like to do some thing else because I do the same thing every day and it gets pretty boring. I would like to do different things. And learn something else, too. I like working down in the mail room because you're always keeping busy and time goes by really fast.

Boredom, on the other hand, was one of the greatest sources of job dissatisfaction for these young workers. As Nancy said to me about her first COOP job:

> At first I was bored, but now there's more stuff to do and I like it better... . In filing it was the same stuff over and over. Now I do more exciting work; you have to use your mind more. It's more challenging and I like that.

Because the work flow in an office is seldom steady, there were times when the student-workers consciously stretched out their work, not to avoid doing more work, but to prevent an extended period of time in which there was nothing to do. When I asked Dolores, who worked in a word processing center, if there were any ways in which she would like to see her job changed, she responded:

> The only way my job could be improved would be to have more updated quipment. We'd be able to put out more

> work. Now we have to sit a lot and wait for it to finish the run.

Job pressure, isolation, eye and back strain were not Dolores's chief concerns with her job, although these conditions were objectively present. For her, the primary problem was sitting and waiting.

This analysis of production motivation should not be construed, however, as suggesting that these young women were invariably willing to accept the production commands of the company. Although work pride, a service orientation, relations with co-workers, and avoidance of boredom functioned to keep the student workers well within the production standards of the company, three factors commonly made production problematic for the company. Those factors can be referred to as the distribution of work, the pace of work, and the routinization of work.

As the earlier example of the double shift at United Group suggested, office workers started staging slow-downs if they had reason to believe their workload was increased because of others' neglect, if in other words, they did not perceive work to be fairly distributed. They were particularly disgruntled by the unfair distribution of work when supervisors were involved: when a supervisor appeared to have favorites who were spared unpleasant tasks, or when they were exempt from the rules and regulations they enforced. Referring to United Group's time lapsing system, one alumna said:

> What makes it worse is that the supervisor gets 100% no matter what and the supervisor might not even be working.

The pace of work demanded of employees provided another production problem for the employer. On the one hand, too little work created boredom and dissatisfaction, and on the other, too rapid a pace created pressure and frustration. Both extremes resulted in poor work quality. The company in my sample which demanded the fastest production rate from employees, measured

by a strict accountability or time-lapsing system, also had such a rapid turnover rate that they instituted a policy of never giving worker recommendations. Workers verbalized their anger and frustration with the system:

> I think lapsing is good for the organization, for production, but not for the workers.
>
> I don't think we needed to be time lapsed. It just made pressure. I don't think it made people go faster; we just ended up throwing forms away.

The third type of production problem for employers was routine work. If work was overly standardized or routinized, simply having enough of it to keep busy did not alleviate the experience of boredom. As Nancy said about her routine work in a filing department, "I always felt like I was going to fall asleep."

Generally, workers found it impossible to maintain a high quality and quantity of production when the tasks they were given were so repetitive as to create a mesmerizing effect. This condition was most often present in filing departments of large companies. Nancy would have quit her job had she not been transferred to another department, Joan's work evaluation plummeted the quarter she was assigned to a filing department, and United Group Insurance Company felt compelled to hire a consulting firm to reorganize work in its filing department where production problems were rampant. As a result of the study, workers were rotated to different jobs more often and taught new tasks more quickly.

BECOMING DEFERENTIAL WORKERS

The School Experience

In much the same way that students were encouraged to become productive at the workplace, so too were they encouraged to become deferential to their supervisors and managers. They were taught that authority figures were to be respected and their actions unquestioned, that problems with supervisors or

managers were individual matters and should be handled privately, if at all.

Mrs. Lewis frequently discouraged the COOP students from criticizing their supervisors or managers, denying or diverting opportunities for them to vent frustrations or ill-feelings. Early in the school year, especially, students were taught that beginning workers did not know enough to evaluate supervisors and that what they had to learn was to adjust to unpleasant situations.

When Katrina, for instance, elaborated on how the disorganization and carelessness of the men she typed for multiplied her own work, Mrs. Lewis laughed, said "that's life," and moved the discussion on to a different topic. The message seemed to be that even if bosses were not perfect, and order-giving not efficient, there was nothing to be done about it, so it was best to adjust to the situation.

On another occasion, Mrs. Lewis remarked to the class that some companies were going into "flex-hours," allowing employees flexibility in determining when they would put in their hours of work. Dorothy spontaneously commented that her place of employment had that policy, but that her boss would only let employees she liked take advantage of the policy. Mrs. Lewis responded with the technological determinist suggestion that the type of work they were engaged in made it impossible to utilize such scheduling. Dorothy, who would not be dissuaded, reacted with a quick, "Oh, no..." but Mrs. Lewis, who apparently did not want students to fall into the practice of criticizing supervisory practices in front of one another, shifted the discussion on to a different topic.

This practice or diverting of cutting off discussions of conflictual relations with authority was particularly evident in the curriculum unit that directly addressed that area. One month, Harper's Bazaar magazine carried a special section called the "New Secretary's Guide." Mrs. Lewis decided to

utilize the articles in that section for instructional purposes and distributed them to the students to read. One of the articles was titled "Office Troublemakers: Ways to Beat Them at Their Own Game!" The first sentence read:

> No doubt you have run across them: hypercritical bosses who unerringly find flaws in your most creative work; overagreeable subordinates who cheerfully make promises they can't fulfill; indecisive associates forever fearful of upsetting the status quo

and went on to suggest strategies for handling all three types of problem situations: those with bosses, with subordinates, and with co-workers. The last example in the article dealt with know-it-all bosses, those who "know the right way to do everything, and believe most people are inept and ill-informed." None of the COOP students had subordinates. Most of them had associates, and all of them had bosses.

On the day Mrs. Lewis handed this article out for the students to read she made the introductory remark

> The reason I like these articles so much is that they don't just moan about the problem; they give you helpful hints on how to overcome some of them.

She then told the students that the word "troublemaker" actually connoted peers, entry level workers, people who perhaps did not get their work done:

> There are many types of office troublemakers. You could all probably mention one. I'm talking about one on the same level as you. See if you can write down an example. It needn't be personal. Maybe it's something the person next to you does. Say, a person might take supplies home from work. It's not right, but it's common. It's taking advantage. Write a few things down about what's going on. I'll be back in a minute.

When Mrs. Lewis left, Donna told Evelyn about this real "snotty" lady at work who treated her as though she were her doormat and a guy who kept ordering her around. Although Mrs. Lewis had clearly told the students to think of peer examples, troublemakers for Donna were obviously those in authority relation to her.

Upon returning, Mrs. Lewis distributed mimeographed sheets titled "Petty Larceny" and "No Personal Calls." Each was a brief scenario of an office situation followed by three questions asking students how they would respond to the problems of seeing co-workers taking stationery and stamps, and of overhearing personal calls during work time on company phones. She then called on a number of students to say what they would do if they observed something like that happening. Each of them said they would tell the boss. No one said why they would respond in that manner and Mrs. Lewis did not ask. Rather, she merely stated that such peer behavior could put them in a difficult situation since, on the one hand, they would not want to be implicated in the situation, but on the other, they would not want to gain a reputation of reporting co-workers. The class then discussed the different policies their offices had regarding personal calls. Once again students were assiduously kept from focusing on problems with supervisors; the only conflictual relation legitimate for discussion was with peers.

Although Mrs. Lewis was consistent, throughout the year, in her attempts to avoid group discussions of supervisor problems, she did alter her position regarding the students' ability, and therefore the students' right, to evaluate their supervisors by the end of the year. This change took the form of telling the students that as part of their final examination they were to evaluate their workplace as a training station, and if they wanted, they could also evaluate their supervisors. Apart from the fact that after nine months of work the students had much more to base their evaluations on, at least two specific events seemed to have influenced this change.

During a final student evaluation meeting, Mary Jo's supervisor, who always had the highest praise for Mary Jo's work and once called her "a little bit of sunshine who comes in every afternoon," directly told Mrs. Lewis that

now that she was finished evaluating Mary Jo she would welcome Mary Jo's evaluation of her as a supervisor so she would know if there were any ways in which she could improve.

The other situation was Dorothy's persistent problems with her supervisor and her persistence in raising those issues in front of the other COOP students. During one such outburst, Mrs. Lewis told Dorothy that the situation she was describing had nothing to do with her, that she should let those involved handle it and "keep her nose clean." Mrs. Lewis did, however, empathize with Dorothy's feelings about her supervisor and sometimes discussed those problems with her in private. Because Mrs. Lewis generally held Dorothy's opinions about this specific supervisor and because she respected Dorothy's skill and work effort, she was influenced at least to let the students formally evaluate their supervisors if they wanted. Again, however, the form of the evaluation was totally private and individualized. It took place on the last day of school and was seen only by Mrs. Lewis.

Being dissuaded from publicly criticizing supervisors was one way students were taught to be deferential. Another way was in the active promotion of supervisor appreciation. The first day of class, for example, can be viewed as an initiation into proper respect for and appreciation of work supervisors. Mrs. Lewis spent most of the classtime telling the students about the "Appreciation Banquet" they would have for their supervisors:

> At the end of the year we'll be having an appreciation banquet. It's a thank you to your bosses, because it really is a lot of bother to them to hire students and we want them to know we appreciate it.

Since the students had to decide upon and engage in a lengthy money-making project for the banquet, and since they themselves made all the preparations (deciding on a facility, on the menu, the speakers, the theme and decorations) the notion of "appreciating" supervisors filtered in and out of

classroom time throughout the year. On several occasions entire class periods were spent planning the banquet. In addition, students carried their fund-raisers (candy-bars) to their other classes, extra-curricular activities, and to their workplaces for about six weeks. During that time, the candy bars were a constant symbol of the appreciation due supervisors.

Another place in which the concept of respect for authority emerged was in a unit that taught students how to do a company's payroll. Mrs. Lewis explained that there were three different types of employees who were paid in different ways: administrators, who were paid by the week and not paid overtime which was regarded as a normal part of their work; regular staff, like themselves, who were paid by the hour; and piece workers, who were paid according to the amount they produced. Piece work, Mrs. Lewis said, was common in factories, but not in offices unless work had to be done at home where time could not be supervised as it could be at the workplace.

Mrs. Lewis further told the students that they were considered white-collar workers and were given more responsibilities and more respect than the type of factory workers they were dealing with in the payroll unit, who had to use a time clock to punch in and out of work and that they had to understand that a lot of people "lived differently." The implication of this remark seemed to be that as white-collar workers, they did not need the strict supervision blue-collar workers needed because, unlike blue-collar workers, they had internalized a work-ethic or company loyalty. This remark was, however, contradicted by Mrs. Lewis' earlier comments about office workers being paid on a piece basis if they took work home, since supervision was not possible there.

Although no class discussion followed these remarks, the fact that students did not automatically internalize the messages about class distinctions conveyed in these comments became clear in things they said in interview sessions about

their bosses and their families. Although both Mrs. Lewis and the students distinguished classifications of workers on the basis of their work ethic, the characterizations of these classifications were, at times, the exact reverse of one another.

Where Mrs. Lewis projected the image of bosses as so hard-working that they were expected to put in overtime without pay, as the material in the next section will indicate, the boss-image students gleaned from their work experience was often quite different. Similarly, what they learned from their "blue-collar" fathers and mothers often contradicted the image conveyed in class of workers who needed to be under constant supervision because they were not responsible about doing their jobs.

Those students with parents who worked in blue-collar jobs heard stories about hard factory-like working conditions, about workplaces that pushed employees beyond the point of what was considered fair or tolerable. Rather than seeing blue-collar workers as people who would not put in a fair day's work unless coerced, students heard about employers who did not offer a fair day's pay or fair working conditions. Some of the students had parents go on strike, and they generally supported that activity. One alumna's father was on strike at the time of our interview. Her account of the conflict was that the employees were protesting working conditions because the employer had attempted to speed up the pace of work, forcing workers literally to run when making deliveries. In addition, they worked in an unheated area and had to "bundle up in coats" so that by the time they went outdoors into the cold they were "overheated and ended up getting sick." Her father was currently carrying a sign that said "we're men, not machines."

The Work Experience

The students' work experiences taught them, however, that the designations

administrators, white-collar workers, and blue-collar workers did not adequately describe the hierarchical division of labor they experienced. One quite salient division for many of them was that between upper managers and floor supervisors. As Wright (1978) argues, this division is primarily the result of the expansion of the capitalist enterprise and the development of monopoly capitalism.

Monopoly corporations (and large state departments) tend to create "complex hierarchies of social control," differentiating levels of control and power. Two of the most fundamental levels are those of top managers, who have "control over the entire labour process" and supervisors, who control the immediate, day-to-day labor process. Those in top managerial positions can also have control over the "physical means of production" (what is produced as contrasted to how it is produced) although these two functions of management can be separated and hierarchically ordered (Wright, 1978: 52-71).

As would be expected, then, the top managers exerted little direct authority over the students' work process. Nonetheless, the women I interviewed were much more critical of these managers than they were of their front line supervisors.

Somewhat contrary to the widely accepted position that complex hierarchies deflect class conflict by focusing worker aggression on foremen or immediate floor supervisors rather than higher level managers, who often come to be seen as workers' protectors (Rosenberg, 1953), I found that the student-workers I observed and interviewed by and large had far more favorable perceptions of their immediate bosses than they did of the managers.

This situation was, I believe, the result of two conditions that characterized the COOP students' work. First, as noted in the relationship described earlier between Mary Jo and her supervisor, the student was often in an appren-

tice relation to ther supervisor, who functioned more as a teacher than a traditional floor supervisor. The COOP student primarily needed to learn the tasks and duties that were part of their work role in that particular office; seldom did she have to be disciplined to do that work.

This situation resulted in the COOP students being genuinely fond of and grateful to their supervisors, who often taught the students more "useful knowledge" than they believed they were getting at school. Mary Jo's comment captures the sense of this relationship:

> My evaluation of my supervisor is very high. She is always there to explain anything to me. Almost everything that I do is new to me, so she helps out a lot. My office situation is very casual; my supervisor makes everyone feel very comfortable. I think that we have developed a very good relationship. I feel that I learned a great deal from my supervisor because she has helped me learn so many things that I never knew before.

The second condition that evoked favorable perceptions of supervisors extended this role of helper. Not only did the supervisor teach new workers departmental tasks and assist even experienced workers with problems that inevitably cropped up, but she was also most often a worker herself and generally the most skilled worker in the department. Although she oversaw the work of the entire office (distributing, monitoring, collecting, and re-routing finished work), she was often engaged in doing much the same work as the office staff. She was, in many ways, one of them, not over them. In a few places, the COOP supervisor had a work role quite distinct from supervisory capacity; sometimes she would be physically some distance away from her supervisee, with walls or partitions separating them from one another. In these cases, she would meet with the student at the beginning of the afternoon to explain the work that needed to be done, or would simply place self-evident work on the student's desk. In some instances the work flow carried on naturally from day to day so that daily direction was not even needed. If the student had a question, she

would seek out her supervisor. The supervisor here carries the identity more of lead worker and helper than boss or watchdog, an identity that was invariably extolled by the students:

> The ideal boss would be understanding and would help out without griping.

These teacher/helper roles played by the supervisors produced a community or family culture in many of the offices. In fact, the "family" was spontaneously used by a number of the students during interviews or on their examinations:

> Our bank has approximately 100 employees. It may seem like a lot, but it really isn't. We are like one big family.

> My company has grown from a one man development to one of the world's largest merchandising organizations. I am now considered part of the family of 400,000 employees.

Contrasting her experience at REMIC to previous experiences at United Group, Jenifer said,

> The people from United Group stand out in my mind as really stuck up and unsociable. It seems like they just go to work there. At REMIC, it's more like a family. People welcomed me. No one at United Group ever did that.

Managers, however, seldom related to the COOP students as helpers or teachers and were negatively perceived by them as unproductive, self-aggrandizing, and exploitative. The students, for instance, frequently commented on the managers' apparent lack of work. As Lois said to me after a certain employee walked past the photocopy machine she was working:

> The big shots should do my job for a while and see how they like it. Take that guy who just came in. As far as I can tell, he doesn't do much of anything.

Another interviewee similarly remarked:

> The bosses are always out to lunch. They're never there. I don't know how they got their jobs. Sometimes they don't do much of anything.

At the beginning of a COOP class one day in February, I overheard Katrina telling another student how angry she was about an incident that had happened at work the day before. Because Katrina did not have time to eat lunch between the end of her morning classes and when she was scheduled to begin work, her supervisor had given her permission to eat at her desk for the first ten minutes of her pay period. Someone apparently objected, so Katrina was being docked for that time even though she continued to work and practically "swallowed my lunch whole." She continued:

> It seems like the guys at work who are in charge just walk around and don't do much for most the day. And they get paid so much money. I'd like to get their paycheck. And it's the people under them who end up doing all the work.

And although, in the last sentence Donna attempts to rescind her statement, written as part of her final examination, there is little doubt that a critical tone accompanies this description of her corporation's highest executives:

> I don't know exactly what goes on up in Corporate. All I know is that the president of our Association, and all of his vice presidents have their offices up there. All I ever see them do is shuffle papers from one side of their desk to the other, sign their important John Hancock's on documents, smoke, drink coffee, and have never ending all day meetings. I don't mean to be critical or to make fun of them. I'm sure whatever they do is very important to the well-being of our Corporation.

Eleanor, who similarly complained of managers who took long lunch hours and coffee breaks, who stood around telling stories and jokes, and who sat at their desks with apparently little to do, thought a solution to this problem would be to pay everyone on an hourly basis:

> I think it's better if people are paid on an hourly basis. That way, if they're not there, they're not paid for it. That's the way it should be. Everyone should be on that basis--even the big bosses upstairs.

Finding themselves working hard for their take-home pay, the students were frequently surprised or angered when they perceived those in supervisory or

management positions doing or having to do less than that.

Besides being critical of managers' apparent lack of productivity, the student-workers were also negatively impressed by the trappings and symbols of status that so often accompanied those positions, regarding these symbols as a form of self-serving behavior, unrelated to the work role. Almost invariably, for instance, when a company was located on more than one level, the bosses' offices were on the top level. Unlike the work space of the average office worker, these offices were private, comparatively large, and nicely furnished. The distinction did not go unnoticed by the lower level employees.

> One of the big bosses who sits upstairs is over my supervisor. That's where all the really nice, lush offices are.

These symbols of status, which extended to an assortment of perquisites, could be harshly judged by entry-level workers:

> Lately what's been bothering me is that the president got the board to get her car classified as a company car so the credit union pays for it. That bothers me because she uses it for personal business too. I'd like to audit people who do things like that--whether it's just a rip-off or something illegal. And at the end of each month she gets $125.00 tax free for business expenses. She doesn't even have any business expenses. And it's like that. People with big salaries get big raises and people with little salaries get little raises.

Another way in which managers evoked ill-feelings from clerical workers was by demanding work from them that the clericals considered to be within the managers' own job scope. This experience of being exploited and "dumped on" gave rise to harsh reactions. Debbie, for instance, referred to herself as "the little Toby, the go-fer, the person they send to do this and that." She resented the work the managers gave her because she regarded it as "shit work" they should have done themselves rather than sitting in their offices "shooting the bull" all day long.

Another alumna, who worked in a state department, offered these reflections

about work demands in a hierarchical division of labor and the men in the top administrative positions:

> It seems that the lower you are on the chart the more work you have to do. I think that when some of the directors are asked to do reports, instead of gathering the information themselves, they call down for it. I don't think they're doing other things. They're just putting off things they should handle themselves.... Sometimes I go on deliveries and their offices don't look like they're busy. I've heard they're in their positions because of brains, but I'd think they'd at least have papers on their desks that they're working on--or something.

CONCLUSION

This account of authority relations has indicated that both the school and workplaces engage in practices to transmit a work ethic and docile respect for authority, and to accommodate young workers to their place in a hierarchical division of labor. But, contrary to the claims of the functionalists, my data lead me to conclude that young workers may exhibit loyal, dependable and docile behavior even while they are quite critical of the work behavior of their superordinates. Thus, authority relations are not in and of themselves legitimated by school ideology, structural correspondences or work experience. If superordinates are not perceived as "workers" who engage in fair practices their authority is held suspect, even if not directly challenged.

Moreover, this study has indicated that the primary reasons the COOP students were good workers was not because they had internalized the expectations of their employers and the lessons of the school, but because they had their own psychological and cultural reasons for producing work of high caliber. The students were encouraged to be productive because of the need to overcome boredom, the desire to offer service to the customer, and by their relationships with their co-workers and supervisors. Their cultural orientation supported this inclination toward productivity since it stressed personal

relationships and pride in personal achievements. These young female workers were quite prepared to transform and accept the transformation of what are essentially exchange relationships into personal relationships because family, community and service were highly salient to them. Immediate, surface, apparent relationships (which are nonetheless real relationships) served to hide the structural relations that governed them. These workers willingly consented to work hard because they experienced work as helping their supervisors (whom they liked) or the consumer (whom they identified with). They did not generally experience their productivity as cooperation in their own exploitation.

So while the students' helping or service orientations did free them from experiencing their jobs as boring and tedious by infusing them with meaning, purpose and significance, this transformation at the cultural or ideological level did little to transform the structural, wage relation of exploitation beneath it. Similarly, the students' pride in their work and their qualifications served both to give them more control over their own labor process and also to enable their employers to extract a higher rate of surplus value.

But although the main process at work in these students' lives was one of social and cultural reproduction rather than transformation, I have argued that their insights and actions did more than recreate oppressive structures and relations. As I have tried to emphasize, the decisions and practices of these women made a great deal of sense given the constraints they were working within. Moreover, each attempt a subject makes to redefine the social relations in which she is located has the power and potential to become something more.

"REFERENCES"

Althusser, Louis
1971 "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." Pp. 127-186 in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. London: New Left Books.

Ashton, D.N. and David Field
1976 Young Workers. London: Hutchinson.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Jean-Claude Passeron
1977 Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. London: Sage.

Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis
1976 Schooling in Capitalist America. New York: Basic Books.

Brannen, P. (ed.)
1975 Entering the World of Work: Some Sociological Perspectives. London: HMSO.

Dreeben, Robert
1968 On What is Learned in School. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Edwards, Richard
1979 Contested Terrain: The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century. New York: Basic Books.

Erickson, Frederick
1975 "Gatekeeping and the Melting Pot: Interaction in Counseling Encounters." Harvard Educational Review 45: 44-70.

Gaskell, Jane
1981 "Sex Inequalities in Education for Work: The Case of Business Education." Canadian Journal of Education 6: 54-72.

Giddens, Anthony
1979 Central Problems in Social Theory. Berkeley: University of California.

National Commission for Manpower Policy
1976 From School to Work: Improving the Transition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Parsons, Talcott
1959 "The School Class as a Social System: Some of its Functions in American Society." Harvard Educational Review 29: 297-318.

Report of a Conference
1978 Young Women and Employment: What We Know and Need to Know about the School-to-Work Transition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau.

Rosenbaum, James E.
1978 "The Structure of Opportunity in School." Social Forces 57: 236-256.

Sewell, William H., Robert M. Hauser and Wendy C. Wolf
1980 "Sex, Schooling, and Occupational Status." American Journal of Sociology 86: 551-583.

Willis, Paul
1977 Learning to Labour. Farnborough: Saxon House.

Wolpe, AnnMarie
1978 "Education and the Sexual Division of Labour." Pp. 290-328 in Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe (eds.) Feminism and Materialism. London: RKP.

Wright, Erik Olin
1978 Class, Crisis, and the State. London: New Left Books.